

*Ben Brower, MREA*

Senate Energy & Telecomm. Comm.

Exhibit No. 4

Date 1/20/2015

Bill No. SB 134

## Local Energy Investment Act

Clean Energy, Montana Jobs

We, the undersigned, support the passage of legislation by the 2015 Montana Legislature that will put Montana businesses to work while giving consumers more energy choices.

Montana's net metering law guarantees that the customers of NorthWestern Energy get fair credit on their bill for any extra energy they've generated on-site with a renewable power source. Since its passage in 1999 with near unanimous support of the Legislature, our net metering law has served this state well. More than 1,000 solar arrays, small wind turbines and micro-hydro generators have been installed across the state. These renewable energy systems on homes, fire stations, schools, farms and Montana businesses have helped Montanans secure their energy supply and control energy costs. Net metering keeps our energy dollars close to home and has encouraged individuals to invest private capital in clean, renewable energy, without a government mandate.

However, policy barriers are artificially constraining renewable energy businesses. The current law sets arbitrary criteria that simply protect monopoly utilities while keeping affordable, clean energy financially out of reach for too many households and businesses.

We call on the Montana Legislature to:

- 1. Allow neighborhood net metering.** Multiple utility customers should be able to buy a share of a local solar array, wind turbine or micro-hydro system and receive credit on their bill according to how much energy the project generates each month.
- 2. Raise the cap on net-metered systems.** Montana's cap on net metering shuts out many businesses and institutions from offsetting their energy loads with a net-metered renewable energy system. Thirty-seven states allow systems larger than Montana's 50 kilowatt limit. It's time that we allowed Montana's business community the opportunity to secure greater energy cost certainty with an investment in on-site renewable energy.
- 3. Allow aggregation of multiple meters.** Property owners with multiple utility meters (for example a farmer with a separately metered irrigation pump) should be able to count the production from a single renewable energy system toward all of their electric meters on the same or adjacent property.
- 4. Stop the credit giveaway.** Under current law a net-metered customer must sacrifice any unused net metering credits to the utility at the end of a 12-month billing cycle without any compensation for the value of those credits. As a matter of fairness, customers should be able to keep their net metering credits indefinitely.

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It's time to update our 15-year-old net metering law in order to give homeowners and businesses more opportunities to invest in their own energy supply.

Organization/Business	Business contact	Additional Info	Location
<b>Architecture</b>			
Stevenson Design	Chad Sutter; Mike Stevenson	Architecture firm	Miles City, MT
High Plains Architects	Randy Hafer	Architecture firm	Billings, MT
EnviroWise Design, LLC	Catherine Logan	Architecture firm	Emigrant, MT
Artemis Institute & StudioIryker	Lori Ryker	Architecture firm	Bozeman MT
<b>Builders and Low-Income Housing Developers</b>			
Terry Davenport Design and		Home builder	
Natural House Builders	Terry Davenport	Builders and housing developers	Victor, MT
McCall Development	Brad McCall	Low Income Housing Developers	Billings, MT
GMD Development	Greg Dunfield	Low Income Housing Developers	Seattle, with projects in MT
Homewood	Andrea Davis	Low Income Housing Developers	Missoula & Billings, MT
<b>Local Governments &amp; Public Officials</b>			
City of Bozeman	Mayor Jeff Krauss, Deputy Mayor Carson Taylor	Bozeman, MT	
City of Missoula	Mayor John Engen, Chase Jones	Missoula, MT	
Livingston City Commissioner	Adam Stern	Livingston, MT	
Park County Comisioner	Steve Caldwell	Livingston, MT	
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)	Ann Schilling	Livingston, MT	
Former legislator	Bob Ebinger	Livingston, MT	
<b>Farms, Ranches, Other farm services</b>			
Tongue & Yellowstone Irrigation District	Roger Muggli	Irrigation District	Miles City, MT
Montana Farmers Union	Chris Christians		Montana
Center for Rural Affairs	Steph Larson		National
Charter Livestock	Steve Charter	Ranch	Shepherd, MT
Dahlman Ranch	Jean and Floyd Dahlman	Ranch	Forsyth, MT
Golden Ranch	Nick Golder	Ranch	Forsyth, MT
Fix Ranch	Mark Fix	Ranch	Miles City, MT
Radue Ranch	Kelly F. Radue	Ranch	Miles City, MT
SC Anderson Ranch	Matt Cunningham	Ranch	Livingston, MT
Snowy Range Ranch	Lee Watson, Ranch Manager	Ranch	Livingston, MT
B Bar Ranch	Maryanne Mott, Owner & Manager	Ranch	Emigrant, MT
Sand Creek Farm	Dena and Alvin Hoff	Farm	Glendive, MT
The Farm	Ken Michel	Farm	Dutton, MT
The Homestead	Janet McMillan	Farm	Greenough, MT
O. W. Skari & Sons, Inc.	Arlo Skari	Wheat farm	Chester, MT

**Farms, Ranches, Other farm services - cont.**

Woodhouse	Bill Woodhouse	Retired farmer	Power, MT
Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool Co.	Becky Weed	Lamb Farm and wool products	Livingston, MT
Deep Creek Green, LLC	Anreas Ludder	Organic Farm	Livingston, MT
Red Lodge Food Partnership	Martha Brown		Red Lodge, MT
Farms for Families	Mark and Caroline Rehder		Livingston, MT
Mustang Fresh Food	Carole & Dan Sullivan	Grocery store	Livingston, MT
<b>Renewable Energy Installers &amp; Other Services</b>			
ViZn Energy	Craig & Dave Wilkins	Energy storage technology	Columbia Falls, MT
Sundance Solar	Henry Dykema	Installer	Red Lodge, MT
Bozeman Green Build	John Palm	Installer	Bozeman, MT
Moodie Wind	Jon Foster	Installer	NW region including MT
SBS Solar	Dan Brandborg	Installer	Missoula, MT
Oasis Montana	Chris Daum	Installer	Stevensville, MT
Independent Power Systems	Amy Graham	Installer	Bozeman, MT
Solar Montana	Jackson Isbell	Installer	Helena, MT
Thirsty Lake Solar	Jeff Wongstrom	Installer	Bozeman, MT
Harvest Solar	Brad Van Wert	Installer	Bozeman, MT
Choice Energy	Paul House	Installer	Missoula, MT
Solar Plexus	Rip Hamilton	Installer	Billings, MT
Winpower West	Ben Reed	Installer	Alder, MT
Baker Light Industries	Wayne Baker	Installer	Charlo, MT
MT Solar	Janelle Stauff	Installer	Bozeman, MT
Onsite Energy	Orion Thornton	Installer	Victor, MT
Sunelco	Tom Bishop	Installer	Whitehall, MT
Sage Mountain Center	Christopher Borton	Renewable energy consultant, wind	
Construction	Caroline and David Villa	turbine dealer	
Montana Energy + Design	Jim Baerg	Wind energy auditor	
<b>Tourism Services</b>			
Simms Fly Shop	Robert Gibson		Bozeman, MT
Chico Hot Springs Resort & Day Spa	Colin K. Davis, Co-owner & Manager		Livingston, MT
The Wild Side, LLC	Nathan Varley	Guided recreational tours in	Gardiner MT
Yellowstone Reports	Linda Thurston	Yellowstone NP	Gardiner MT

<b>Tourism Services Cont.</b>		
Beartooth Powder Guides	Ben Zavora	Guided recreational tours in YNP and Beartooth Mountains
Sweetwater Travel	Dan Vermillion	Cooke City, MT
Last Best Fest Director	Storrs Bishop	Livingston, MT
Broadus Motels	Jean Hough	Livingston, MT
Parks' Fly Shop	Richard Parks	Broadus, MT
Private Guide in YNP	Margarita McLarty	Gardiner, MT
Ecological Consulting & Interpretive Guide	Jesse Logan	Livingston, MT
<b>Medical and Fitness</b>		Emigrant, MT
Granite Sports Medicine	Darcy Cook	Livingston, MT
Big Sky Occupational Therapy Services	Cynthia Radue	Miles City, MT
Red Lodge Veterinary Clinic	Susann Beug	Red Lodge, MT
Healthy Living	Janet Sharpless	Livingston, MT
Firehall Fitness Center	Pam Shoenen	Livingston, MT
<b>Other</b>		
Whitehall GeoGroup, Inc.	Dr. Debra Hanneman	Whitehall, MT
Allen Foundation	William Hand	Nye, MT
Dailey Appraisal	Mike & Sue Dailey	Livingston, MT
<b>Arts &amp; Culture</b>		
Artist	Tim Holmes	Helena, MT
Artist	Bob Newhall	Livingston, MT
Artist	Charles Parks Reece	Livingston, MT
Tom Murphy Photography	Tom Murphy	Livingston, MT
Windy Flats Gallery	Edward Barta & Barbara Gunn	Nye, MT
Livingston Center for Art and Culture	Robin Hoggan Ebinger	Livingston, MT
Elk River Books	Marc Beaudin	Livingston, MT
<b>Restaurants/Other food services</b>		
Tongue River Winery	Bob & Marilyn Thaden	Miles City, MT
Toppers Cellar	Mickey and Art Galloway	
Wheatgrass Saloon	Lisa Beaudin	Livingston, MT
Gumbo Highlands	Bill Tramp	Miles City, MT
Wildflour Bakery & Cafe	Taylor Heson & Rebecca Parker	Emigrant, MT
Chadz	Chad Petrolis	Livingston, MT

# Let's Move Renewable Energy Forward

## Make Renewable Energy Affordable and Accessible for All

### **Allow neighborhood net metering:**

Several states have passed laws that allow individual utility customers to buy into a local solar array or wind turbine. Subscribers receive a credit on their power bill according to how much of the project they own, and how much energy it produces each month. This way a customer can get the benefits of renewable energy even if they're a renter or don't have an ideal site for solar panels or a wind turbine on their own property.

**Stop the credit giveaway:** Under current law a net-metered customer must sacrifice any unused net metering credits to the utility at the end of a 12-month billing cycle. The customer receives no compensation for the extra energy they've given to the utility. As a matter of fairness, customers should be able to keep those credits indefinitely.

## Remove Barriers to Renewable Energy Development

**Lift the cap:** Montana law caps the size of a NorthWestern Energy customer's net-metered solar array, wind turbine or micro-hydro generator at 50 kilowatts (kW). That's big enough for a home or small business, but it's too small to allow a large farm, manufacturing facility, hospital or school to meet their energy needs with on-site clean energy. Most rural electric co-ops have even lower caps. Thirty-seven states allow net-metered systems larger than 50 kW, enabling businesses and institutions to secure greater energy savings.

**Multiple meters, multiple savings:** A farm, university or multi-unit housing project with multiple electric meters on the same or adjacent property should be able to run all those meters with the energy from one solar array or wind turbine. This simple fix would streamline on-site renewable energy projects and cut costs.



Photo Credit: Moodie Wind, Great Falls

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Montana Renewable Energy Association  
PO Box 673, Missoula, MT 59806 • (406) 214-9405



# Local Energy & Montana Jobs

## Net Metering: Fair Credit for Clean Energy

Broadly distributed around Montana are more than 1,000 solar arrays, small wind turbines and micro hydro projects that provide power to homes, businesses, schools, farms and ranches. When the wind is blowing or the sun is shining and these generators produce more energy than the owner is using, the extra electrons flow onto the power grid and are sold by the utility to neighboring customers. Montana law guarantees that renewable energy system owners get full credit on their power bill for each kilowatt-hour of clean energy they provide to the utility. **That's fair. Let's keep it that way.**

## Why are Utilities Putting up Barriers to Rooftop Solar?

Renewable energy is helping Montana families and businesses take charge of their energy costs like never before. The wholesale cost of solar panels has dropped by two-thirds since 2008, and production from net-metered energy systems in Montana has nearly tripled in that time. However, monopoly utilities have historically made money by building big power plants and transmission lines and some see rooftop solar as unwelcome competition and a threat to their bottom line. In response, utilities around the country are lobbying hard to curb rooftop solar and small wind with new fees, taxes and rate hikes that dismantle the fair deal we have with net metering. **Don't let Montana utilities take away our clean energy options.**

## Energy Savings, Consumer Protections

Studies in Texas, Minnesota, California, Vermont and Nevada demonstrate that on-site solar energy provides a net benefit to utility customers, including customers that don't own solar panels. That's because solar power comes online at times of high demand when power from other sources is most expensive. Plus, on-site renewables deliver energy without inefficient transmission line losses and costly pollution controls. These investments keep our energy dollars close to home and put engineers, electricians, roofers, and renewable energy installers to work. **Local energy works for Montanans.**



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